

Someone has named you in a discrimination complaint ...

- **This does not mean that you have discriminated against anyone.**
A charge of discrimination is the first step in an investigative process.

- Our job is to investigate claims of discrimination in the City of Seattle. We enforce City, State and Federal anti-discrimination laws.

- **We do not take sides.**
We are a neutral agency. Until we finish our investigation, we reach no conclusion about the complaint .

- Throughout the investigation, all parties will be able to present their side of the story.

- At any time during our investigation, you may request a negotiated resolution of the charge.



- This brochure gives a brief overview of our investigative process. Please refer to your notification letter and other documents for a complete statement of your legal obligations.

- We want to work with all parties to resolve complaints. Please call SOCR at (206) 684-4500 with any questions or concerns.

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) investigates people's claims of illegal discrimination in Seattle in:

Housing Contracting
Employment Public Accommodations

Unlawful discrimination may be occurring if a person is treated differently from others because of:

- race
- color
- sex
- religion
- age
- disability
- ancestry
- use of a guide dog or service animal
- creed
- political ideology
- national origin
- marital status
- parental status
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- use of a Section 8 certificate



City of Seattle Greg Nickels, Mayor

For more information, call us:

Seattle Office for Civil Rights
(206) 684-4500 TTY (206) 684-4503
700 3rd Ave., Suite 250
Seattle WA 98104-1849

www.cityofseattle.net/civilrights

Information can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

How to Respond to a Complaint

Filed with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights



An overview



Tel. (206) 684-4500
TTY (206) 684-4503

Case Process – An Overview

1. We send you a Notification of Charge & Request for Information

- Someone has filed a charge of illegal discrimination against you or your business. The “Request for Information” is your first opportunity to respond to the charging party’s complaint.
- Before you respond to this request, you have the option to call our office (206.684.4500) to ask for a negotiated resolution of the charge. **You may request a negotiated resolution at any time during the investigation.**

2. You respond in writing within 20 days (10 days for housing cases)

- Please respond to each item in the Request for Information.
- Please answer the questions as completely as possible.
- Include documentation to support your answers. Also include witnesses’ statements, if possible.
- The investigator assigned to the case may call you for more information.

3. The charging party responds

- The charging party has a chance to respond to the information you have submitted.

4. We investigate

- The investigator assigned to the case contacts you to set up interviews with you and witnesses related to the case.
- During the interview(s), the investigator may request additional records or files. You are obligated to comply with all such requests.
- Investigators are neutral and objective. They do not take sides.

5. We review all information

- The investigator reviews all the information and materials gathered from you, the charging party, and witnesses.
- Our investigators follow the law to evaluate the evidence.

6. We issue a finding: “reasonable cause” - or - “no reasonable cause”

- If we find reasonable cause, the investigator will contact you prior to issuing the written finding.

Negotiated Resolution

- A negotiated resolution offers an alternative to a full investigation. It can save you time, attorney’s fees, and emotional turmoil.
- You may request a negotiated resolution at any time.
- You and the charging party meet with our investigator or a neutral third party, to negotiate a settlement agreement that is acceptable to all sides.
- Settling a case is not an admission of fault. A settlement ends the case for you as long as you comply with the agreed-upon terms.

Results of the Investigation

Reasonable cause

- The evidence supports the charge that discrimination has occurred.
- You will receive a copy of the finding and an explanation.
- You have seven days to make an appointment to discuss settling the case.
- If you do not reach a settlement, the Office for Civil Rights has the option to turn over the case to the Seattle City Attorney’s Office to pursue litigation.

No reasonable cause

- The evidence does not support the charge that discrimination has occurred.
- You will receive a copy of the finding and an explanation.
- The case is closed, unless the charging party files an appeal within 30 days to the Seattle Human Rights Commission.